

PEOPLE & THINGS

By ATTICUS

THE Communist agitators in some of our trade unions seem to have got their signals crossed, or else they are guilty of serious "deviation."

In a recent address to the Tientsin Federation of Trade Unions, Liu Ning-i, vice-president of the Communist-controlled World Federation of Trades Unions, issued the following directive to all trade-union organisations:

"Everything must be subordinated to the need for labour productivity to be raised ceaselessly. The tendency among trade-union officials to seek immediate improvement in wages or working conditions is a non-political trend which neglects the overall interest of the working classes and serves only temporary and individual interests."

Record Sales

PUBLISHERS announce with pride the sales of their best sellers, but for some unknown reason the sales of gramophone records are never revealed. On investigation I learned that, like the figure of 5,000 for a novel, in the record world, 10,000 is regarded as satisfactory.

The best-selling record of all time, which has sold between three and four million copies and is still selling, appears to be Anton Karas's "Harry Lime Theme" from the film "The Third Man," and the runner-up is perhaps "Now Is the Hour" sung by Gracie Fields, with sales of about two million.

The Voice that Failed

THIS information seems harmless enough yet my efforts to obtain enlightenment from H.M.V. were almost ludicrously frustrating. Banded from Sales Manager to Press Officer to Statistics and then, with evasiveness which would have done credit to M.I.5, back again down the line, on the second day I finally got back to the Press Officer's secretary only to hear his ringing tones in the background declaring that he was not "in" to Atticus.

So H.M.V. must not blame me for having transferred my inquiries to the Sales Manager of the Decca Company, nor be surprised that the two records he mentions happen to be manufactured by that company.

Bespoke Bookseller

THAT supreme thriller writer, Mr. Raymond Chandler, is in London and may quite possibly make England his second home. His mother was English and, as an example of his Anglophilic, he even buys all his books in England, preferring their appearance and format to the products of American publishers.

He told me last week that he leaves their choice entirely in the hands of Mr. F. J. Francis, whose modest bookshop at the corner of

Princes Arcade and Piccadilly has an almost fanatically devoted clientele.

"Apart from having the best nose for thrillers in London," said Mr. Chandler, "the great thing about Francis is not the books he sells you but the ones he refuses to let you buy at any price."

Bonanza Plane

ON Braniff Airways Flight 320 between Amarillo, Tex., and Denver, Col., which are in uranium regions, a special hostess has a geiger counter and a bit of genuine ore, and she explains to her passengers many of whom are amateur prospectors, how to work the apparatus. This is a minor facet of the "uranium rush" which is gathering momentum in the States to the accompaniment of phoney stock issues, secret compass reckonings whispered on deathbeds, pitched battles with claim jumpers and an occasional fabulous "strike."



The "Prodger"

THE fever is unlikely to grip Britain. The only known uranium deposits (in Cornwall and, as announced last week, in Scotland) are meagre, and the rights of the individual landowner under the Atomic Energy Act are nebulous and, at best, unrewarding. Moreover, even the Government does not think it worthwhile to prospect on its own account. But a certain amount of private prospecting must be going on because Messrs. E. K. Cole market a Portable Radio-active Ore Detector ("prod" to prospectors) which sells for £25, and my photograph shows a genuine English "prodger" feverishly scouring Messrs. Cole's backyard.

Duke of Sparta

SPARTA'S envy of Athens has not died and when a few days ago the fifteen-year-old Prince Constantine of Greece was pronounced

Duke of Sparta the town of Sparta greeted the news with a civic snuff.

It is 2,359 years since the Peloponnesian War ended, and the Spartans are still resentful of the establishment in 1833 of Athens, their rival, as capital of a united Greece.

Titles of nobility or distinction are not conferred in Greece, but a decree was passed during the reign of George I (grandfather of the present king) whereby the title of Duke of Sparta was accorded to all heirs apparent to the Greek throne.

The title was therefore first held by King Constantine XII during the reign of his father, but he used it only when travelling incognito in Europe. Along with the title went a large estate near the town of Leonidas, but this was confiscated and distributed to landless peasants when Greece was proclaimed a republic in the early twenties.

Drinkmanship

THERE are many occasions when one sighs for a drink which is non-alcoholic without being or looking "soft," and I am indebted to Mr. R. J. Eaton, Assistant Superintendent of the British Transport Commission's Operational Research Division, for the answer. It is a lime juice and dry ginger ale, known as a "J. Arthur Rank" because it is the favourite drink of this famous teetotaller. It tastes pleasantly dry and tart and looks just like a strong whisky and soda.

Mr. Eaton was the right man to ask because he is representing the British Railways Temperance Union at the Twenty-second Congress of the International Railways Alcohol Opponents Club (literal translation) in Vienna.

The British Union is twenty-five years older than the international organisation and claims fourteen out of its 50,000 members. Incidentally it would seem teetotalers consider themselves armed against ill-fortune for the congress takes place next Friday, the thirteenth.

Abominable Snowwoman

TALES of the Abominable Snowman have never captured my interest, but I am now haunted by description of the Abominable Snowwoman contained in Sherpa Tenzing's life story, which is being serialised in America. She was seen by his father, Chang la Mingma, on the Barun Glacier, and Tenzing says: "He came upon it suddenly, and it was so close that he says he saw it clearly. It looked like a big monkey or ape, except that its eyes were deeply sunken and its head was pointed at the top. The colour was greyish, and a noticeable thing was that the hair grew in two directions—from above the waist upward and from below the waist downward. It was about four-feet high, and a female, with long, hanging breasts; and when it ran, which was on two legs only, it held the breasts up with its hands. My father was frightened, of course. But so was the yetti. Right away it turned and began climbing a steep mountain slope, making a high, shrill whistle, and soon it disappeared."

Chez Fu Manchu

AT one of San Francisco's famous Chinese restaurants a diner finished his meal with some of those small Chinese cakes which contain encouraging messages on slips of coloured paper.

The first slip of paper said: "You are as beautiful as a lotus flower," the second: "You will live till eighty and be very rich," and the third: "Help! I am a prisoner in a Chinese bakery."